DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 155 520 CG 012 461

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TITLE A Semi-Projective Technique for Diagnosing Problems Connected with the Educational Environment in Young Children.
PUB DATE [77]
NOTE 13p.; For related document see CG 012 462

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Childhood Attitudes; *Children; *Diagnostic Tests; *Educational Environment; *Family Environment; Family Life; Handicapped Children; Parent Child Relationship; *Projective Tests; Psychoeducational Clinics; *Psychological Studies
IDENTIFIERS *Bar Ilan Picture Test

ABSTRACT

The Bar-Ilan Picture Test for Young Children is a semi-projective device which was designed to fill a gap in the local diagnostic battery of the educational system. The test depicts realistic and meaningful situations which focus upon issues generally encountered in the educational environment of the young child. The demand characteristics of these pictures are such that they elicit information from the child specific to the problem at hand, information which would be more difficult to obtain from the fully projective techniques. Thus, we may pinpoint the children's perception of their place in society, in their formal educational setting, and at home, as well as their perception of what constitutes their weaker points and of their potential for coping with life. The test consists of nine basic pictures, four of which have separate versions for boys and girls, i.e. 13 pictures in all. Each picture represents a situation from school or from home. The presentation of each picture is accompanied by standard questions which relate to the children's thoughts, feelings and behavior in the specific situation. The reliability and validity of the test are discussed. Two case studies illustrate the utility of the test as a diagnostic tool. (Author)

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A SEMI-PROJECTIVE TECHNIQUE FOR DIAGNOSING PROBLEMS CONNECTED WITH THE EDUCATIONAL ENVIRONMENT IN YOUNG CHILDREN

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
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The Bar-Ilan Picture Test for Young Children is a semi-projective device which was designed to fill a gap in the local diagnostic battery of the educational system. The test depicts realistic and meaningful situations which focus upon issues generally encountered in the educational setting of the young child. The "demand characteristics" of these pictures are such that they elicit information from the child specific to the problem in hand, information which would be more difficult to obtain from the fully projective techniques. Thus we may pinpoint the child's perception of his place in society, in his formal educational setting, and at home, as well as his perception of what constitutes his weaker points and of his potential for coping with life.

While planning the test we were aware of the various subpopulations for whom it was intended. Accordingly, we endeavored to construct the pictures so that each child could identify with them. The fact that the test is rather structured proved to facilitate responses also in culturally deprived children.

Another advantage of the semi-projective technique is the possibility of imparting the raw information gleaned from the test to the educational agent because the test is not intended to probe the deeper layers of personality. Therefore, our ultimate aim is also to make it a diagnostic tool in the hands of a wider range of people engaged in direct work with the child, such as counselors, social workers, and senior members of the teaching staff.

Method

The test consists of nine basic pictures, four of which have separate versions for boys and girls, i.e., 13 pictures in all. Each picture represents a situation from school or from home, and the order of presentation emphasizes the importance of school since the situations from school precede those from home. The sequence is as follows:

Picture 1. A boy and a girl on their way to school-- examines the child's expectations towards school.

Picture 2.* In the classroom. Children are seated at their desks. A child is standing in front of the teacher--elicits attitudes towards teachers, classmates, and the learning situation.

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Picture 3. In the schoolyard. Two groups of children are playing, while a girl is standing at the side as an onlooker--focuses in a general way on the social relations within the school frame.

Picture 4.* At home with mother. A child is seen with mother--reveals child's perception of his relationship with his mother especially regarding her involvement with school.

Picture 5.* At home with father. A child is seen with father--gives information similar to that obtained from the preceding picture with respect to the father.

Picture 6.* Two children are in their room, one is sitting at a table with a book while the other is playing on the floor--examines child's preference for studying versus playing.

Picture 7. Two children playing in their room. An older, non-specific person showing his head at the door--reveals sibling relationships.

Picture 8. Parents alone in the living room facing each other--discloses child's perception of relationship between parents especially as regards their attitude towards him.

Picture 9. A group of children including an invalid boy in the playground--examines child's perception of handicapped children and the extent to which he identifies with them.

The presentation of each picture is accompanied by standard questions which relate to the children's thoughts, feelings and behavior in the specific situation. Questions may be varied by the experienced tester according to the special problems of the child.

The administration of the test lasts about 15 minutes.

Reliability

In order to study the reliability, the reactions to the test were categorized. Fruchter, Strauss and Itskowitz (1977) used the following categories: (1) general anxiety; (2) awareness of possible activities in school; (3) perception of pupil's role; (4) perception of teacher's role; (5) perception of parental involvement in school; and (6) pupil's preference for study vs. play.

Twenty-four first-graders and nursery school children were tested twice with an interval of three weeks. Correlations[1] were calculated for the results of the two testings, and they range from $r = .56$ to $r = .92$ for the six categories as seen in Table 1.

*This picture has separate versions for boys and girls.

[1]All correlations in the various studies are Pearson Product Moment correlations.

Table 1

Test-Retest Correlations For 24 Subjects

Categories	General Anxiety	School Activities	Pupil's Role	Teacher's Role	Parental Involvement	Study vs. Play	Total
r	.56	.73	.90	.92	.85	.76	.86

In the same study, two judges were asked to cetegorize the test results independently. The interjudge correlation was $r = .76$.

Validity

1. In the Fruchter et al. study, the test results of 17 nursery school children were categorized, while their teacher was asked to predict the children's standing in those categories. Table 2 shows the correlations between the teacher's prediction and the actual test results obtained from the children.

Table 2

Comparison of Children's Reactions to Teacher Judgment

Categories	General Anxiety	School Activities	Pupil's Role	Teacher's Role	Parental Involvement
r	.63	.55	.51	.42	.80

2. Another measure of validity used in the same study was the intercorrelation found between the amount of information that the nursery school child has about school and the degree of general anxiety displayed towards entering the first grade. The assumption was that the more information a person has about a role, the less anxiety he will feel towards assuming that role (cf. Serbin & Allen, 1969). The test was administered to 56 nursery school children, and the correlations found between the amount of information and general anxiety was $r = .52$, $p < .001$. Thus, the assumption about the reverse relationship between information and anxiety was borne out.

3. The children were placed in different educational settings. Half of them attended the usual nursery schools which are separate entities, while the other

half frequented a kind of "infant school" consisting of kindergarten and first grade located within the general school setting. It was assumed that the children in the infant-school setting would have more information about school than the children attending the usual kindergartens, and that they should accordingly display less anxiety. Both of these assumptions were confirmed by t-tests between the results of the two groups: $t = 4.70$, $p < .001$, for information; $t = 10.53$, $p < .001$, for anxiety.

4. In the same vein, Strauss (1975) studied two groups of 32 nursery school children, one of the groups attending the ordinary nursery schools while the other frequenting the infant schools. Each of the schools was composed of eight children from four different socioeconomic backgrounds and the groups were matched. The results of the testing were calculated by χ^2. Significant differences between the groups were found for general anxiety, $\chi^2 = 4.5$, $p < .05$. Likewise, there was a significant difference between the expectations of the children towards the teacher's behavior, $\chi^2 = 4.8$, $p < .05$. However, as regards the children's fear of personal failure in school, there was no difference between the two groups. An ad hoc insight would explain this finding as evidence that fear of personal failure is more related to the self-concept of the child, while the fear of the school setting including the teacher's behavior would be more related to the educational framework.

5. Fogel, Tamari, Gottesdiener and Strauss (1977) compared the expectations of 21 nursery school children towards first grade as measured by the test with the attitudes of their parents towards school as measured by a questionnaire according to the assumption that the attitudes of parents influence the attitudes of their children. They found that:

(a) The children's general feeling towards school was correlated with their mother's general attitude, $r = -.69$, $p < .001$, i.e., the more favorable the attitude of the mothers, the less anxiety was displayed by their children.

(b) The children's expectations towards school activities were correlated with the general attitudes of both parents, $r = .48$, $p < .02$; the more favorable the parents' attitude towards school, the more task-oriented were the expectations of the children. Furthermore, the children's expectations were correlated with their fathers' expectations of task-oriented activities in school, $r = .47$, $p < .02$. Lastly, the more favorably the fathers related to the teachers, the more task-oriented were the expectations of their children, $r = .45$, $p < .02$.

(c) However, the children's expectations towards the teacher were influenced by their mother's attitude, $r = .57$, $p < .003$, i.e., the more positive

the opinion of the mothers, the more positive were the expectations of their children.

(d) The children's perception of parental involvement in school was correlated with their mothers' involvement as expressed in the questionnaire, $r = .62$, $p < .001$.

As will be seen from the above, the mothers were more influential as regards the children's emotional expectations towards school, while the fathers influenced the task orientation of the children's expectations. This finding is in agreement with Parsons and Bales' (1955) theory of parental roles. Thus, the results of this study lend support to the validity of the test.

Validity of the Test as an Individual Diagnostic Tool

Actually the test was constructed not so much for research purposes as for individual diagnosis. Accordingly, we shall deal with a couple of case studies in order to illustrate the utility of the test as a diagnostic tool.

Case 1: An identical twin girl, five years old, was referred to consultation, the problem being whether to try to get her into school or to let her stay in kindergarten for another year. Her twin sister was an undisputed candidate for entering school, while she herself was kept back by her teacher who would not even let her be tested by the official psychologist. Her mother was vacillating and tended to give in to the teacher's judgment. The test protocol is quoted verbatim:

Picture 1:

Q. What does the girl say to the boy about school? A. That it is going to be great fun.

The examiner, feeling that the answer relates more to her twin sister than to herself, explores:

Q. And what does the boy say? A. That he thinks it won't be such fun.

Q. And what is it really like in school? A. The girl has great fun, while the boy does not like it.

Q. And what is the name of the girl? A. (gives the name of her sister)

Interpretation of answers: The girl is identical with her sister, while the testee has a blurred identification; she may as well be the boy in the picture. Her sister feels that everything is coming her way, while she herself expects to fail.

Picture 2:

Q. What do the children do in class? A. They read and write and learn the Bible.

Q. What does the teacher say to the girl? A. That she does not know how to read.

Q. And what does the girl feel? A. That she knows how to read, but she does not succeed in writing.

Q. What do the other children feel? A. They feel that they do know.

Q. And how will it be in the end? A. In the end, the girl will not be in class.

Interpretation of answers: The girl feels that only she will be failing. She has a certain feeling that she might be able to cope with the learning situation, but she succumbs to the opinions of the others.

Picture 3:

Q. What do the children do here? A. They are talking together.

Q. What do they say? A. That it is not worthwhile to be in school because it is terribly difficult.

Q. What else? A. One of the girls says that it is better to stay in kindergarten.

Q. How do they feel about it? A. In the end, the children will say that it is better to go to school because then they will know how to write.

Interpretation of answers: From the answers, we learn about the girl's inner struggle: on the one hand, she is convinced that school will be difficult and, therefore, it is better to stay in kindergarten. On the other hand, she feels that if she will not go to school she may lose out on something. She uses the "sour grapes" as a not too successful defense.

Picture 4:

Q. What does the girl tell her mother? A. That the teacher said that she does not know how to write.

Q. What does her mother say? A. She asked her whether her teacher really said so.

Q. What does the girl answer? A. That she really does not know how to write.

Q. What does her mother say? A. That she should stop attending school.

Q. And what does the girl feel? A. That she would like to go to school.

Interpretation of answers: The girl perceives her mother's lack of confidence in her abilities and her mother's acceptance of her daughter's being unable to

attend school. However, the last answer shows that the girl has not given up.

Picture 5:

Q. What does the girl tell her father? A. That the teacher said that she does not know how to write.

Q. What does her father say? A. That she should not go to school.

Q. What does the girl feel? A. The girl feels that she knows how to write.

Q. What will be the end? A. That the girl will not go to school because her teacher does not permit her.

Interpretation of answers: The girl's perception of the lack of confidence on the part of her parents and the lack of support from them shows up again in an extreme degree. Her feeling of helplessness is heightened by the thought that the teacher (who is, of course, her kindergarten teacher) will not let her go to school, even if she will be able to do so. The girl's feeling that she will be able to learn is important because it shows her inner strength which makes her believe in herself in spite of all the negative reactions she gets from others.

Picture 6:

Q. Like whom do you want to be? A. Like the girl who plays because I always wanted an electric train. (one of the girls in the picture plays with a train)

Q. Do you want to be like her all the time? A. I want to be like the girl who plays.

Interpretation of answers: The girl is retreating and turns to play instead of studies. Her first answer may imply rationalization and her second answer sounds demonstrative.

Description of Testee According to Test Results

The girl feels herself to be inferior to her twin sister. Her sister is the girl while she herself has a blurred identification.

She doubts her own abilities and expects to fail while her sister succeeds and enjoys life. She gets no support, neither from the grownups nor from the children. Her parents give up and her teacher shuts the door to learning in her face. Even if she thinks she will be able to study, her teacher will not allow her to do so.

The girl seeks to comfort herself with "sour grapes," but is not successful in convincing herself. However, she has an inner strength which shows itself in her belief that in the end she will be able to learn.

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Case 2: Objective description--a well-developed boy, six years old. He shows behavior problems, such as restlessness and aggression. His father became a 100% invalid, when the boy was three years old, and sits in a wheelchair. His mother manages the household and is responsible for everything. The boy did not adjust to school, and tends to become upset and leaves the class at any opportunity. He reacts to failure in learning by erasing, tearing out pages of books, being unable to fulfill a task, and by not attending school. However, he is a nice boy, cooperative, and is extremely in need of attention. In school there is full cooperation among the various educational agents in order to help him. The test follows.

Picture 1:

Q. What do the children do? A. They go to the house; this is the house and here is a fence and a clock which tells the time.

Q. What does the boy say to the girl? A. They put up a clock there.

Q. What will they do at school? A. They will study.

Q. What were their feelings about school? A. They studied well and felt good (about school).

Interpretation of answers: The answers show that the child relates to irrelevant details (he describes the picture instead of making up a "plot"). This is a distinct indication of latent anxiety in the light of which the optimistic answers seem difficult to believe.

Picture 2:

Q. What do the children do? A. One of them says to the teacher that he does not have a book.

Q. What does the teacher say? A. The teacher says: "Then tell your mother to buy you one because otherwise you will not study and know how to read."

Q. What does the child think? A. The child thinks that you should know and not forget.

Q. How does he feel about it? A. He feels good about it.

Q. What will be in the end? A. He will tell his mother.

Interpretation of answers: The boy's anxiety shows up in his expectations that something bad is going to happen, such as forgetting his book and being scolded by the teacher. He feels that he deserves it and is ready to atone; however, he thrusts the responsibility upon his mother.

Picture 3:

Q. What do the children do? A. One child says: "I want to play hide-and-seek" and another says "tag" and a third child wants to go home; but it is impossible that one child should do one thing and another should play tag, and two children at the side play with sand and get dirty.

Q. The children talk about school; what do they say? A. These two say: "Come let us go to school." But Mommy will not let them go because they are dirty.

Q. What will they do? A. Only one child goes into the elevator and wants to go home, but he does not know which number and then he cannot get out of the elevator, and then Daddy comes down and cannot help him, and then Mommy comes down with a hammer and gives a blow to the elevator, and then it opens and he gets out.

Q. What will be in the end? A. They forget about school and they don't want to go to school, and they say to Mommy that it is her fault as she did not let them go, and the principal is angry with them and says: "Go at once to my room."

Q. How do they feel about it? A. They don't feel good about it, but one of them says: "But Mommy did not let us go because we were full of sand" and one child takes off his cap and throws it at the principal.

Interpretation of answers: The boy feels a strong need for structure and organization, probably because he lacks an inner organization. This is seen both in the contents of the first answer and in the lack of coherence among the following answers. All the answers indicate strong feelings, mostly threatening, which are connected with the parents and school. We also learn about the boy's perception of the relative strength of his parents--his father cannot help, his mother limits him and only she knows how to solve the problems in which he gets "caught" though she does so "par force." However, she does not quite master the situations because of the principal (who in reality is kind to the child and wants to help him). He is perceived as threatening, and reflects on the one hand the boy's aggression towards the father-figure and on the other hand his wish to see him as the domineering figure. The child's inner struggle with his mother is highlighted by his accusations that she causes him to fail.

Picture 4:

Q. What does the child tell his mother? A. They did not let his mother get in and the principal shouted at her and his mother said: "Why?" "Because you did not let us go yesterday." Afterwards she comes to school and the principal says: "Why didn't you tell your mother that

you had to go?" And now the principal does not let me come to school and I won't be able to read.

Q. What does his mother say? A. His mother feels bad because the principal shouted at her.

Interpretation of answers: The present answers confirm our interpretation of the preceding picture. They emphasize the two problem areas--the child's relations with his parents and his feelings that he is certain to fail at school.

Picture 5:

Q. What does the boy tell his father about school? A. He tells him that the principal got angry with him.

Q. What does the father answer? A. His father says: "Why?"

Q. What does the boy say? A. Because Mommy didn't allow me to go to school. Then Daddy says that he will come and scold the principal.

Q. How does the boy feel about that? A. He feels bad because he doesn't what to go to school with Daddy because he is ashamed of him.

Interpretation of answers: The boy again accuses his mother; he maligns her character to his father. The masculine image of the strong principal is contrasted with the masculine image of his father of whom he is ashamed.

Picture 6:

Q. Which of the boys do you want to be like? A. Like the one who studies because he does his homework and the other one just plays and does not know how to read. Afterwards the first boy will play, too, and says to the one who is playing: "Why do you play? Do your homework first and then you can play." I shouldn't like to be the one who plays because he is not permitted to play, but only to do his homework.

Q. How do the children feel about that? A. Both of them feel alright about it.

Interpretation of answers: The boy is troubled by his homework. He sees it as an obligation which he wants to fulfill. However, it constitutes a heavy burden for him. Like in the first picture, the optimistic answer at the end does not sound quite convincing.

Picture 7:

Q. What do the children do? A. That is difficult to say.

Q. Try. A. One child is coloring a picture and the other one is preparing food. The little mother turns on the gas and shouts: "Fire" and the airplane causes a fire and the ball rolls into the fire.

Interpretation of answers: This picture is obviously threatening to the boy. He tries to evade it. When forced to answer he expresses a feeling of oncoming catastrophe through the theme of "fire." Obviously, the fire may also be a symbol of an oedipal conflict (it is also connected with the "little mother") which makes sense in the light of the aforementioned fact that his father became an invalid when the boy was three years old.

Picture 9:

Q. What do the children do? A. One is laughing and the other one is not. They don't want to go to school because the principal is angry with them and he will never let them come to school and hits them.

Q. What does that boy (the invalid) feel like? A. He feels bad because he has something on his leg and it is difficult for him to walk and he falls.

Interpretation of answers: The boy feels an absolute failure as regards school and his relationship with the principal. The invalid boy reflects his feeling of failure of which he takes a fatalistic view. The invalidity of the boy in the picture is probably connected with thoughts about his father whose invalidity he never mentions openly.

Description of the boy according to the test:

This is an intelligent boy with a capacity for expressing himself. He sees his environment as insecure, disorganized, and threatening mainly as regards his identification with his parents and his expectation of complete failure at school. He perceives his mother as playing an important and responsible role, but he is full of fear with respect to her capacity for helping him and is not sure that he wants her to be the domineering figure in the family. He is aware of his father's inability to function though he denies his invalidity. However, he identifies with him while at the same time he is ashamed of him. He projects his conflicting feelings towards his father on the principal together with his strong aggressive feelings. The school frightens him, mainly because of his high level of aspiration and his fear of possible failure. However, he seems to possess inner strength to cope with stressful situations, and he invents various solutions to such situations.

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